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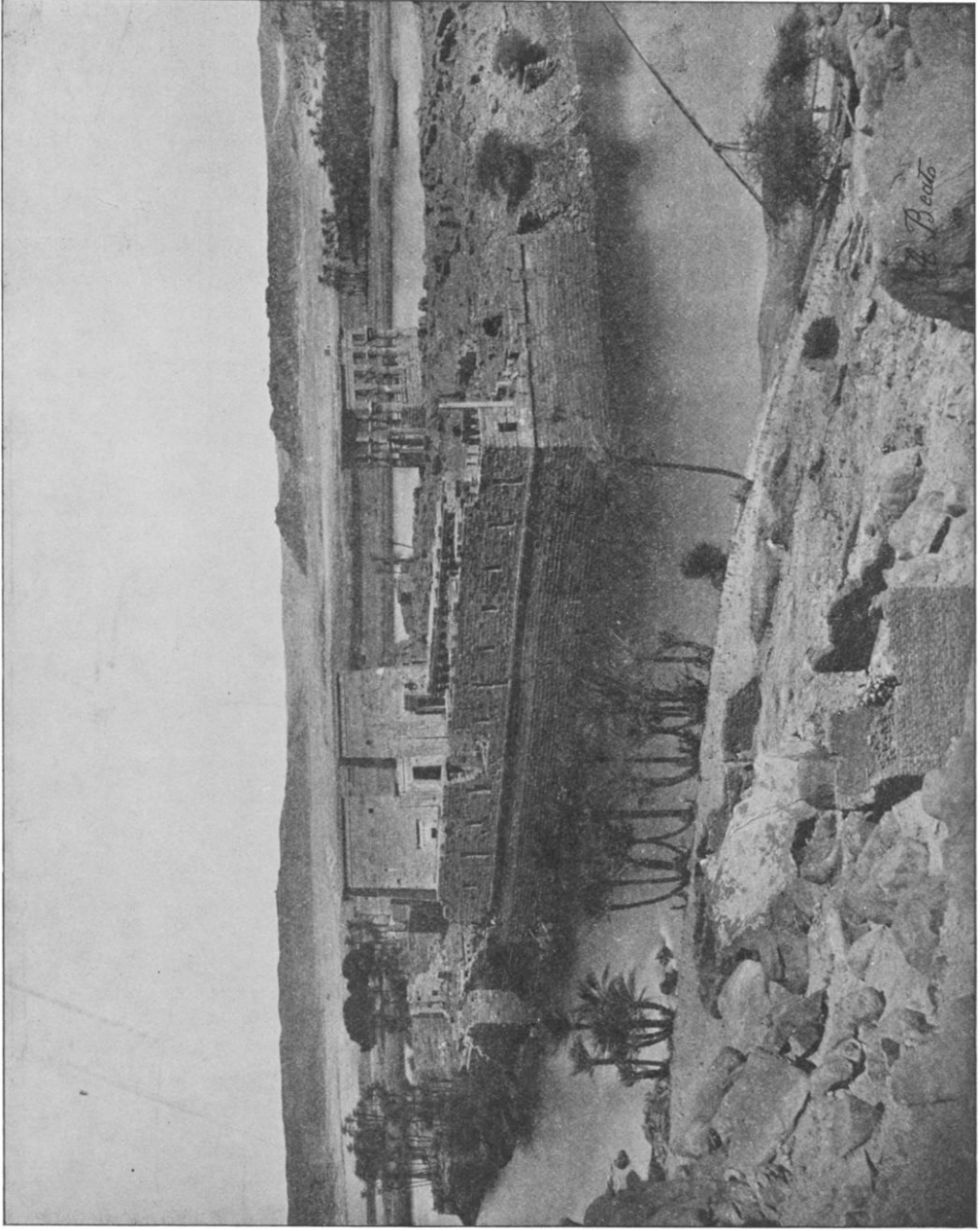
RECEPTIVENESS AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

OUTSIDE one's self there exist other selves, and back of us all there exists a Higher Self. This is the primary truth of religion: finite beings created, sustained, and blessed by an Infinite Being; men with limited knowledge, imperfect character, and feeble service in a universe whose God has complete knowledge, is perfect in character, and renders an ideal service. The recognition of our finiteness, of our relation as conditioned beings to God the Absolute One, is the first principle of our growth. The teaching of Jesus about God, and about man's relation to him, gives us the highest truth, for it tells of our dependence upon the Heavenly Father, and leads us to find our true self-realization by self-committal to him. The human can become ideal only by vital union with the divine. In isolation the finite attains nothing.

*THE FINITE AND
THE INFINITE*

When Jesus said to his disciples, "Except ye turn and become as little children ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3), he was replying to their inquiry as to who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. He adds: "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." The quality of childlikeness which Jesus here impresses is that of humility—the absence of egotism, pride, worldly ambition. And humility is a quality closely akin to receptiveness. The child is not self-sufficient; it feels its dependence upon others, and welcomes their protection, provision, and companionship. He is willing and eager to receive from his

*A QUALITY OF
CHILDLIKENESS*



THE RUINS OF AN EGYPTIAN TEMPLE AT PHILAE.

parents all those things which minister to his wants and accomplish his growth. He looks to them in full trust for the necessities of life, the fellowship which his heart craves, and the nourishment suited to his mind. With unquestioning and simple reliance upon father and mother, the child grows to maturity. This receptive quality of the child-life is in the highest sense a spiritual quality. Although the natural comes first, and after that the spiritual, the natural comes for the sake of the spiritual, and the spiritual laws rule throughout. It is not less true of the spiritual life than of the physical life that receptiveness is the condition of growth. The individual throws himself wide-open to all that is about him, human and divine. This is the law of his development.

But a merely passive receptiveness does not produce growth. Food taken into the physical body accomplishes nothing until the body actively responds and assimilates the food.

**RECEPTIVENESS
AN ACTIVE STATE**

Similarly regarding spiritual nutrition; man has not simply to open himself to the divine presence and influence which surround him; he must actively make these his own, weaving them into the texture of his own character. It is for this reason that religion is incomplete and ineffective which stops with worship and does not realize itself in active service. To be good and to do good are interdependent; either one is impossible without the other. The receptive man therefore is he who welcomes into his life the spiritual forces of the universe, appropriates them to his personal self, and gives them expression in what he is and what he does.

Receiving stage by stage the spiritual nourishment which God supplies, one finds his life expanding and deepening through

**THE
ENLARGEMENT
OF LIFE**

childhood and youth into full manhood and womanhood. The "advance in wisdom, and in favor with God and man" is a process of years. Into the life come, by God's providence, those elements which correspond to the needs of the developing personality, and he who seizes upon these elements and transforms them into his own likeness finds that life which is more abundant. The enlargement of life

is the destiny of each individual. But it is attained only by those who welcome all that God brings to them, and assimilate this nourishment into body, mind, and heart, growing day by day toward Christ's ideal for men. The world-life, infinite and finite, encompasses and presses upon us. To take one's place in this world-life, to receive and give one's share, is to enlarge the life. The mighty river moving toward the sea finds its greatness, not at its source, which is insignificant, but by welcoming into its flood many tributary streams which flow to it on its course.

Made in the image of God, guided and informed by him, humanity advances to its perfect state. He alone finds true well-being who seeks it in this divinely planned and accomplished perfection. Individual well-being apart from social well-being—that is, the well-being of others equally with one's self—is impossible. Men are so related to one another, and God's plan so completely embraces all, that one cannot apart from others find a true well-being. To move forward together toward the goal which God has set for us, in the best possible way, helping others as we go, is the duty that the gospel lays clearly and strongly upon men. Doing God's will as Jesus has revealed it to us, striving always for the highest goodness and the noblest service, we find ourselves in the great current of the divine purpose. Faith is that attitude of the soul, of the entire self, which unites man to God, which makes it possible for God to work in and through him, which enables God to bestow upon him the full measure of his blessings, and to use him for the advancement of his kingdom. When our lives are one with his, then we live.

TRUE
WELL-BEING